

Remarks

The above Amendments and these Remarks are in reply to the Office Action mailed January 27, 2005. Claims 33-52, 56-78, and 85-97 have been allowed.

Currently, claims 11-142 are pending. Applicants have cancelled claims 11-29, 32, 53-54, 79-84, 98-104, 106, 112-115, 117-122, 124-125, and 127-142, and amended claims 30, 31, 55, 105, 107, 116, 123, and 126.

I. Information Disclosure Statements

On October 21, 1999, when filing the present application, Applicants filed an Information Disclosure Statement (IDS). A copy of that IDS is attached as Exhibit A to this Response. Attached as Exhibit B to this Response is a copy of a postcard received from the United States Patent and Trademark Office ("PTO") acknowledging receipt of the IDS and the cited prior art references.

Applicants have not received the form PTO-1449 from the Examiner, acknowledging that the Examiner considered the cited prior art. Applicants assert that the Examiner has a duty to consider the cited prior art and return a copy of the form PTO-1449 to the Applicants. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner send to Applicants a copy of the initialed PTO-1449 acknowledging that the Examiner considered the cited prior art.

In paragraph 1 of the Office Action dated August 29, 2001, the Examiner acknowledged that a second IDS submitted on February 12, 2001 (dated February 8, 2001) was missing from the file and requested that Applicants resubmit it. Applicants resubmitted this IDS along with copies of the prior art cited therein with their Response A dated December 17, 2001. However, Applicants have still not received the form PTO-1449 from the Examiner, acknowledging that the Examiner considered the cited prior art. Applicants assert that the Examiner has a duty to consider the cited prior art and return a copy of the form PTO-1449 to the Applicants. Attached to this Response as Exhibit C is a copy of the IDS submitted on February 12, 2001. Attached to this Response as Exhibit D is a copy of the postcard received from the USPTO acknowledging receipt of the IDS and the references cited in the IDS. Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner send to Applicants a copy of the initialed PTO-1449 acknowledging that the Examiner considered the cited prior art.

II. Rejection of Pending Claims

Claims 11-14, 16, 29, 32, 53, 54, 79, 83, 84, 98-104, 112-115, 124, 125, 130-134, 140, and 141 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,057,833 (*Heidmann*).

Claims 11-14, 16, 29, 32, 53, 54, 79, 83, 84, 98-104, 112-115, 124, 125, 130-134, 140, and 141 have been cancelled. The cancellation of these claims shall not be construed as an admission that the claims or the subject matter contained therein is unpatentable. The cancellation of these claims is without prejudice or relinquishment of the subject matter contained therein. Applicants reserve the right to represent these claims in a continuation application.

III. Objections to Pending Claims

Claims 15, 17-28, 30-31, 55, 80-82, 105-111, 116-123, 126-129, 135-139, and 142 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but indicated to be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Claims 30, 31, 55, 105, 107, 116, 123, and 126 have been rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim from which they depend and any intervening claims. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that these claims, along with those dependent upon them (claims 108-111), are patentable over the cited art.

Claims 15, 17-28, 80-82, 106, 117-122, 127-129, 135-139, and 142 have been cancelled. The cancellation of these claims shall not be construed as an admission that the claims or the subject matter contained therein is unpatentable. The cancellation of these claims is without prejudice or relinquishment of the subject matter contained therein. Applicants reserve the right to represent these claims in a continuation application.

IV. Conclusion

Applicants respectfully request a Notice of Allowance as to claims 30, 31, 33-52, 55, 56-78, 85-97, 105, 107-111, 116, 123, and 126. Applicants also request copies of the initialed forms PTO-1449 attached as Exhibits A and C.

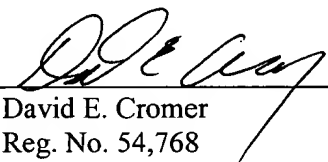
The Examiner's prompt attention to this matter is greatly appreciated. Should further questions remain, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned attorney by telephone.

Enclosed is a PETITION FOR EXTENSION OF TIME UNDER 37 C.F.R. § 1.136 for extending the time to respond up to and including today, June 27, 2005.

The Commissioner is authorized to charge any underpayment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 501826 for any matter in connection with this response, including any fee for extension of time, which may be required.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: June 27, 2005

By: 
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